

18L 843

A

1508/1167.

DEFENCE
OF THE
THREE LETTERS

To a Gentleman Dissenting from the
CHURCH of ENGLAND,

Against a Pamphlet, entitled,
THE DISSENTING GENTLEMAN'S
ANSWER

To the Reverend
Mr. WHITE'S Three Letters, &c.

By JOHN WHITE, B. D.
Sometimes Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge.

LONDON, printed: And,
BELFAST,
Re-printed by JAMES MAGEE in *Bridgestreet*, near
the *Four-corners*, M,DCC,XLVII.
[Price Fourpence.]

DEFENCE

OF THE

THREE



Is a Gentleman from the

CHURCH of ENGLAND

Against a Papist, entitled

THE DISSENTING GENTLEMAN'S

A, N, S, W, E, R,

To the Reverend

Mr. White's Three Letters, &c.

JOHN WHITE, B.D.

Sometime Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge.

LONDON, printed and

BELOW.

Reprinted by James Mearns in England, near

the Post-office, M.DCC.LXXV.

[Price Fourpence]

[3]

A
D E F E N C E
O F T H E
T H R E E L E T T E R S

To a Gentleman Dissenting from the
CHURCH of ENGLAND, &c.

AT last we see a Pamphlet pretending to be
*an Answer to my Three Letters to a Gentle-
man Dissenting from the Church of England,*
in the Person and Character of that Gentleman.
But I observe it in certain Marks, and those not a
few, plainly discovering *another kind of Person*, than
I know him to be. So, I shall consider it as the Pro-
duction of some body else, who has taken upon him,
in this way, to instruct the Gentleman how to reply
to me, and so, prevent the Effect which it was ap-
prehended my Letters might have upon him.

It was some Time before I had determin'd in
myself to take any Notice of this Performance ;
and I don't do it *now*, because I apprehend there is
much need, or hold myself oblig'd, to reply to it.
For, indeed, my concern in it seems to be very lit-
tle, there being hardly so much as a third Part of

it, which my Letters could give any reasonable Occasion for. The Gentleman's Aim seems to be, to empty that Part of his Common-place-book, which has any Affinity with our Controversy, or can be, by any manner of Means, connected with it, and to discharge it all upon my Head. All along, he directs his Speech to *me*; and, once in a while, quotes some Passage or Expression in one or other of my Letters, or the *Appendix* to them, adding some descant or Remark upon it; and of this he makes a Handle for calling his Book, in the Title-page, *an Answer* to them. But would you call that *an Answer* to my *Three* Letters, which professes, in a Manner, not to answer the *First* of them, the *longest* of the *Three*? For (p. 2.) he gives Notice, *He shall not enter into the Enquiry, who are the best Livvers, Churchmen or Dissenters, and among which the best Means for holy Living are found, which yet* (he observes) *I do largely, therein, expitiate upon;* and they are, indeed, as the most *material* and *concerning*, so the *main* Subjects of that Letter, taking up above seventy, out of few more than a hundred Pages which it contains. What the next Part will be, we shall know, when we come to see it; but if it be like this, touching upon so few of the many Points I have handled, and, where there are any touch'd upon, almost wholly neglecting *my* Arguments and Reasonings, and only presenting me with *his own*, I should wonder if any learned, or even sensible Dissenter, learned or not, should be of Opinion, that it might be esteemed an Answer. Had he passed by nothing (which, I take it, is the Part of an Answerer) that was material, or which I seemed to lay any Stress upon; had he gone through (in Order, if, haply, he could have reconciled himself to Order and Method) the several Points insisted upon in the Course



Course of my Letters, and examined all my Reasonings upon each, and, in Case there was any Point which he thought I had reasoned upon not ill, had he readily owned it; had he taken (I say) this way, it would have shewn him a fair and ingenuous Adversary, and been a Presumption that he really thought he was in Possession of the Truth; and it would have entitled him to a Reply of the same Kind. So far as he has attempted to do this, or any thing like it, I shall attend him. But, as I am not bound by any Law of Disputation, so I have neither Leisure nor Inclination to follow him in all his Ramblings, which seem purposely contrived to raise a Dust, and to keep the true Points in controversy out of Sight. And if I do follow him in any, and return him an Answer to *some* of those Things which he takes a Fancy to lay before me, and which the Support and Justification of my own Argument does not make it necessary to take Notice of, I here give him to understand, he is to consider *that* as so much thrown in *ex abundanti*, which he has no right to expect from me.

He begins with an Insinuation which I ought not, I think, to overlook, concerning the Unseasonableness of *any Debate of this Kind, in the present Situation of our public Affairs*. If he speaks in regard to our late rebellious Insurrections, it is well known, two of my Letters were published long before they began, and many Copies of the Third were given out, and sent abroad into the World, before they were grown to any Height, or at all attended to. But if the *present Situation of our Affairs* abroad be the Thing meant, I don't see, I own why a Debate of this Kind should be thought unseasonable, when 'tis only between him and me, who, are, both of us, too inconsiderable (I may have

have leave to suppose, at least, till I know who he is) to have any Number of Partizans in it, and to set People together by the Ears. I hope, he does not think that all Sorts of Enquiry or Debate, except those about News and Politics, during the Course of this tedious War, should have ceased, and ought now to cease. However, since he is so tender of stirring up a Debate between Churchmen and Dissenters, while our public Affairs are in the present unsettled State, I hope he and his Friends will not begin one of a more *public* and *interesting* Nature, I mean, a Debate about those *Dignities*, *Preferments*, and *lucrative Posts*, and those *Millions a Year* which he presently mentions, looks after so wishfully, and speaks with so much regret for the Loss of. I am sorry to see, that these same *lucrative* Employments are so languished after, and lie so uppermost in the Thoughts of almost all their Writers, that they hardly know how to draw their Pens, be the Subject they write upon almost what it will, without harping upon them. They are perpetually complaining, as this Author does here, of being deprived of all lucrative or honourable Posts, which they call, but very improperly, their *natural Rights*, when, if they would look into the Book of Statutes,* they would see other Subjects deprived of many of the same, and † some of them deprived of such

* Thus, for Instance, no Attorney, Solicitor, or Proctor in any Court whatsoever is capable of serving his Country in the Commission of the Peace, during such Time as he shall continue in the Business of an Attorney, Solicitor, or Proctor. Attorneys also are disqualified for being Commissioners of the Land Tax, or Sheriffs, while they continue acting as Attorneys, 5 and 7 *Georgii* II.

† The Liberty of cultivating the Ground, may, surely, be called a *natural Right*. Yet by 21 *Hen. VIII.* Clergymen are prohibited, not only to take to farm any more Lands than are necessary for

such Rights as may be truly and properly called Natural. And yet all these quietly submit to such disqualifying Laws, and don't go about to *turn the World upside down* for a *Repeal* of them. However, I hope, (as I said before) this Gentleman, considering how loth he was to enter into the present Debate *at such a Time as this*, will not fail to discourage all other Debates betwixt us, and use his Interest with his Friends, that the Debate, which I just now mentioned, may entirely cease, or, if he cannot prevail so far, he will, at least, prevail with their leading and managing Men, to let it be confined to Paper, and the Bookseller's Shops, and not be brought into *a more public Place*, till such Time as our national Affairs shall be quite settled, and we have nothing to fear on any side: Especially, considering how many of his Friends have, already and long ago, discovered a Way to come in for a pretty good Share of those *Millions*, which their Fellow-subjects partake of; but with how good a Conscience, I leave to God and themselves.—As to their Complaints of suffering and reproach, I was really in hope, that what I had said in the 7th and two following Pages of my first Letter would have kept, at least, any Answerer of mine from speaking again of them, and that I should have had no Occasion to repeat, for his Reproof, what he finds there, or to refer him to it.

And now we come to the Controversy itself: Thus it opens. *The Controversy* (says he p. 2.) *betwixt us, I apprehend, may easily be brought to a plain*

for the Maintenance of their own Household, but to take any annual Rents, or Advantage, or Profit, by Occasion of any Lease, or Farm, by any manner of Means, under severe Penalties; nor is the Vicar permitted to occupy by himself, or any other, any Parsonage, nor the impropriated Tythes of his own Church.

plain and short Issue, if you will heartily join in it. It turns upon the single Point of the XXth Article of your Church, viz. that the Church has Power to decree Rites and Ceremonies, and Authority in Matters of Faith. And then he shews how the Controversy turns upon that single Point. For if the Church has really this Power, then all Objections of Dissenters about Sponsors, the Cross in Baptism, kneeling at the Lord's Supper, and every other Thing, are impertinent and vain. The Church, having this Authority, ought to be reverently obeyed. But if, on the contrary, the Church has really no Power at all, nor any Authority of this Kind, it is then reprehensible, and highly criminal before God, for usurping this Power, and the Dissenters are justified, and will have Honour before him, for entering their Protest against such Usurpation. I plainly perceive what it is he drives at. He is for avoiding all Disputes upon particular Points, and for putting the Matter upon one general Issue, that of the Authority of the Church, a Point lying open to so much quibbling and distinguishing, that it may be controverted by a perverse Adversary, without End. Much in the same Manner does he, as the Romanists are wont to manage with us. For they also decline, whenever handsomely they can, all Disputes about the particular Doctrines and Practices of their Church, and are for drawing us in to put all upon the Proof of the Infallibility thereof, and this, if you believe them, only to save Time and Trouble, and to bring Things, as this Gentleman here affects to do, to one short and plain Issue. "There is (say they) no Occasion to trouble ourselves about the particular Doctrines and Practices of the Church. For if the Church is infallible, they must be, all, right. But if the Church is fallible, then, indeed, any or
 " all

"all of them, may be wrong, and when you have
"shewn it to be fallible, it will be time enough to
"take particular Points into Consideration. Let
"us then keep, if you please, to the single Point
"of *Infallibility*, and put all upon that Issue. Just
"in this Manner this Gentleman addresses me.
"Let us *join heartily* (says he) in bringing the
"Matter to *one short Issue*, and rest the whole Con-
"troversy upon this *one* Point, whether the Church
"has a *Power to decree Rites and Ceremonies*, or not."

We never decline debating with our *Romish* Adver-
saries the *Infallibility* of their Church; at the same
Time, however, reserving to ourselves the Right
to examine any particular Doctrine or Practice of
it; and this the rather, because a Disproof of *any*
one of the Doctrines of that Church is, at least, as
fair a Disproof of the *Infallibility*; as a Proof of
the *Infallibility* would be a Proof of *that* Doctrine.
In like manner, we are always ready to give our dis-
senting Brethren a Reason why we believe the
Church has a Power to decree Rites and Ceremo-
nies, and make other Appointments of the like Na-
ture, not precluding ourselves, however, from the
Right of asserting and defending the Lawfulness
of any one of its Ceremonies in particular. And
if we can shew there were in the Church, in the
Apostles Days, such Ceremonies and Appointments,
or but one or two such, either ordained or approved
by them, without any Precept from the Lord, or
any particular and extraordinary Direction from the
Holy Spirit, merely ecclesiastical and prudential
Institutions, we think, and surely with good Reason,
that the Power of the Church to decree such is
thereby firmly and solemnly established. This Ar-
gument I urged in my *Third Letter*, p. 2. as others
have done before me. And I instanced in the *Kiss*
of Charity, a Ceremony in use in the Apostles
B Days;

Days, but being only of ecclesiastical Appointment, now laid aside, both by them and us. And why did my Answerer decline to answer it, but that it appeared (I guess) a Difficulty so ugly, that he could not endure to look upon it; or so formidable, that he thought it his best Way to avoid it.

What Right now (I ask) has this Gentleman, who, tho' a professed *Answerer*, did not think fit to give any *Answer* to, or take the least Notice of what I had said for the Power of the Church to decree Rites and Ceremonies, what Right (I say) has he to expect I should take any of what he has been pleased to say *against* it. Surely, none at all. 'Till my Arguments for it shall be answered, or at least attempted to be answered, *his against* it can't challenge any, even tho' they did deserve some Attention. Yet I will gratify him so far, as to give him some reply to what he has offered upon the Subject, and, for this once, a more full and distinct Reply than he ought to look for, or than, 'tis like, I shall give him hereafter, to any Point which he thus artfully chuses to deviate into.

By the Power of the Church to decree Rites and Ceremonies, is meant, a Right in the Pastors and Governors thereof to ordain and appoint such Things, so as to make it *ordinarily*, the Duty of the People to conform themselves to them. The Article does not say, or mean, that the Church has Power to decree *any Number*, or *any Sort* of Rites and Ceremonies; nor that the Members of the Church are in Conscience obliged to observe, perpetually, indispensably, in all Cases, and under all Inconveniencies, such as it may lawfully ordain. It only asserts a Power to appoint Rites and Ceremonies, that is, *some* Rites and Ceremonies; and whoever believes it has a Power to appoint *any Number* or *any Sort* at all, may honestly subscribe it; nor
need

need any greater Power than this be asserted for the Justification of the Order and Constitution of the Church of *England*, it having ordained so very few, and those decent and becoming, of clear Signification, and indisputable Use. The Questions, therefore, which the Gentleman asks, and seems to fancy will be so embarrassing to me, are easily answered. *What Church, says he, is it, to whom this Authority and Power is given? You will, doubtless, say, to the Church of England.* To the Catholic Church, I rather say, and to all the Parts and Members of it, and, amongst these, to the Church of *England*. But mind, then, the Consequences of this Claim. *If the Church of England has really this Authority and Power, has not the Church of France, the Church of Spain, the Church of Rome the very same?* I am not scarred at the Consequence, and, therefore, readily admit it. But there follows another which I can't admit, that, therefore, *all the Fopperies and Superstitions of the Romish Church, at least, which cannot be proved to be contrary to the Word of God* (meaning all, I suppose, which are not expressly named in the Word of God, and prohibited there, a most unreasonable Meaning!) *are to be reverently submitted to, and cordially received.* This Consequence (I say) I absolutely deny. For it does not follow, because the *Church of Rome* has a Power, that it may, therefore, *abuse* that Power; because it has a Power to decree *Rites*, that it may therefore decree *Fopperies and Superstitions*; and because it has Power to decree *some Rites*, that it may therefore decree *all* the Fopperies and Superstitions we find in it, and as many more as it thinks fit. Nor does it follow, that the People are obliged to submit to them, when decreed and appointed, so reverently, and so cordially receive them, as he imagines. There are several Degrees of Sub-

mission to Laws, according to the Nature and Kind of them. The Laws of God are to be *simply* submitted to, at all Times, and under all Circumstances; but those of Men, whether Civil or Ecclesiastical, are not to be obey'd and submitted to, after *that* Manner; and the Ecclesiastical in particular, (to speak now only of *them*) concerning ritual and ceremonial Things, do not, even then when the Matter of them is unexceptionable, bind the Conscience, perpetually, and in all Cases, but only then when Disobedience would shew a Contempt and Defiance of Authority, or give Scandal to the Weak; a Power of obliging thus far, and in this Degree, being sufficient to all the Purposes of its Designation and Appointment. But when the Matter of those Laws is justly exceptionable, as being intolercably foppish, and indecent, or shamefully superstitious, so that the Service of God is grievously corrupted and dishonoured thereby, (which is the Truth of the Case in the Church of *Rome*) the Members of the Church are not bound *reverently* to submit, but are justly excused from shewing *any Kind* of Submission to them; and that, for this plain Reason, because they are to obey God (who will not have his Worship dishonoured and defiled; and has commanded that *all Things* in it *should be done decently, and to edifying*) rather than Men.

And hence also may plainly be seen the Vanity of that Pretence, that our claiming for the Church a Power to *decree Rites and Ceremonies*, [and *Authority in Matters of Faith*, which he, all along, mixes and blends with the other, tho' I know not why, his Business being only to shew, that the Church has no Power to ordain kneeling at the Sacrament; and some other Rites it enjoins] hence (I say) we may discover the Vanity of that Suggestion, that the *Claim of such a Power absolutely overthrows the Reformation*. The asserting a Power in Church-governors,

nors, such as we have always asserted, and is not contradicted, but plainly described in the Article, a Power, but *not to ordain any Thing that is contrary to God's Word*, can never, surely, overthrow any Reformation that is according to God's Word. If Church-governors will not come in to such Reformation, but obstinately persevere in maintaining their sinful Errors and Corruptions, the People may reform themselves, and throw off the Corruptions which they cannot submit to without Sin. The Gentleman thinks he has cut me off from this Answer, by bidding me *observe, that the Church alone, and not every private Person is allowed to be the proper Judge* when any Decree of theirs is contrary to God's Word. But where does the Church pretend to be alone the proper Judge, or where disallow private Christians to judge for themselves in these Matters? He only supposes it *must* do so, because else, he thinks, *The Article would be absurd, it would actually overthrow itself, and take away with one Hand what it gives with the other.* That is, the two Clauses of the Article would cross upon each other, and be inconsistent. If indeed the Article had said the Church has an *absolute and unlimited Power to decree Rites and Ceremonies*, and yet, *that it is not lawful to ordain any contrary to God's Word*, I should have been wiser, I hope, than to have contradicted him, but have readily owned, that it does *take away with one Hand what it gives with the other.* But when it only speaks of Power and Authority in the general, without the least Intimation of what kind it is, how can this Gentleman pretend it leaves any room for his vain Censure, unless he thinks, as, in good Truth, he seems to do, that all *real* Power is *absolute*, incapable, in its Nature, of any Limitation or Restriction, and that, if the Rulers of the Church are possessed of *any*, private Christians may
not

not demur to it in any Case, have no right to judge of their Decisions, but must submit to them without more ado, without Examination, or Reserve. A Position which does not come well from the Pen of (one of the Friends of Liberty !) a Protestant Dissenter; and if it were translated from the *Ecclesiastical* to the *Civil* Estate of the Kingdom, would make strange Work in it. Let us put it so, and see how it will come out. “The King of *England* is on all “Hands agreed to have a Power and Authority to “set forth Injunctions concerning divers Matters of “a civil Nature. But mind the Consequences of “this. If he has such a Power, the Subject is “bound *reverently* to *submit* to all his Injunctions, “whatever they may be; and tho’ the Laws have put “upon this Power some Limitations and Restrictions, *they are really of no force and amount to “just nothing at all.* For tho’, you say, he may not “injoin any thing contrary to the Laws, and to the “Rights and Liberties of the Subject, yet of *this “Contrariety the King alone, you will observe, and “not every private Subject, is allowed to be the proper Judge.* For else the Laws, which vest in him “this Power and Authority, are *absurd; they actually overthrow themselves, and take away with one “Hand what they give with the other.* For if every “private Subject has a right to judge of the Injunctions and Ordinances of the King, and to refuse “to obey them, if they appear to him repugnant to “the Laws, and to the known Liberties of the Subject, *then his Authority comes to just nothing at all.* “It is an Authority to *injoin, where none are bound to obey, that is, an Authority over no body, an Authority to do nothing.* It must be therefore a *real “Authority which the Constitution has vested in “him, and, consequently, his Subjects are bound “reverently to submit to, and humbly obey him, in “what-*

“ whatſoever Things he ſhall authoritatively injoin, tho’ they appear to them ever ſo repugnant to the Laws of the Realm, or deſtructive to their own Liberties.”——What think we now of this Doctrine? A very uſeful one it is to ſuch Princes as are meditating a Change of a limited Sovereignty into an abſolute one. *They* may reliſh it very well; but I am ſure the *Subject* will not thank him for it.

But, for Argument’s Sake, let us ſuppoſe the Authority claimed for the Church to be as abſolute as he pleaſes. How would, I pray, *our* Reformation be overthrown by it? Which was not carried on and perfected by popular Noiſe and Tumult, in Oppoſition to Authority, but with the Concurrence of all the Authority in the Nation. ’Tis like, he will ſay, the Sovereign Pontiff did not concur in it. No matter whether he did, or not. The Church of *England* by the Law of God, owed him no Subjection, and had, in itſelf, as all national Churches have, a Right to reform itſelf, and did always do ſo, with the Conſent and Authority of the Kings of *England*, even in thoſe Times when the papal Authority was at its greateſt Height. When any thing was apprehended to be amiſs, and to ſtand in need of a Reform, they did not always wait for, or ſo much as ask his Holineſs’s leave to ſet about it; but did it *inconfulto Romano Pontifice*, and ſometimes in Oppoſition to his Authority and Command, as in our old Hiſtorians is plainly to be ſeen.

I hope, by this Time, the Reader is come to ſee, how little Reaſon the Gentleman has for apprehending that a *Romiſh* *Prieſt* will turn its own *Artillery* upon the Church of *England*, and for ſuggeſting, that by the meer Conceſſion of this XXth Article, *thouſands of Proſelytes* have been, no doubt, gained from us. The Suggeſtion is raſh and groundleſs; for I don’t believe he can name one, who was ever gained

gained by the *meer Concession of this Article*, without other prevailing Motives. Nay, I much question, whether he can name any one, among his thousands, who have ever alledged *this*, among their *other Reasons*, for going over to that Church. Nor is his next Suggestion better grounded, that *this, perhaps, is the Reason why the numerous Converts these Priests are said to make are gathered all from our Church, whereas from among the Dissenters you hardly ever bear of one gained*. That Numbers have been gained within these few Years, is commonly said. But of these, doubtless, a considerable Part have been gained, not from the Church of *England*, but from *no Church*, (the Transition from which to so bad an one is mighty easy) and, before their Conversion, were just as much Churchmen, as they were Dissenters. And if it were certain, that more Churchmen than Dissenters have been gained, even twenty of the former to one of the latter, it is no mighty wonder, there being almost, if not altogether, the like Disproportion between the Numbers of each Party, taking the Nation all together. And if more, in Proportion to the Number of each, have been gained from amongst *us*, the Reason *why* is not *that* which he has suggested, but another even the Multitude of Sects that are among us. We, for the most Part, are educated and instructed in just Notions of the *Nature, Unity, and Communion* of the Catholic Church, maintained in the Church of *England*, and of the great Importance and Necessity thereof; while their People are, generally, so instructed, as to have no kind of Notion of these Matters, or, if any, 'tis only of the No-necessity, or rather, the Insignificancy thereof. And hence it is natural for *our People* to be more easily scandalized at those Schisms and Divisions which they see among us; and more susceptible of Impressions from the artful
Insinuations

Insinuations of *Romish* Emissaries concerning them. This is far more like than that he assigns, to be the true Reason that more Converts to Popery have been gained from *us*. And I wish this Gentleman and his Friends would seriously consider, and lay this to Heart, that, if *our People* are the Persons *offended*, which, no doubt, they must answer for, *they* and every one of *them*, are the Persons *by whom the Offence cometh*, which they also must answer for, no less than the other. But to return to the Business we are upon.

He asks, *who are the Persons invested with this Authority and Power?* And since he so much desires it, I will try to enlighten him in that Point. Not the *King and Parliament*, and no *Other than They*, as he vainly pretends. For the King and Parliament in this very Article, which, together with the rest, is confirmed by Act of Parliament (13 *Eliz.* c. 12.) and thereby made a part of our Ecclesiastical Constitution, have plainly own'd it to be in the Church: And no body imagines, I suppose, that, by the *Church*, they really meant *Themselves*. For that would be Language new and unknown, not only to our Laws, but to all our Writings and Conversations. The King and Parliament then have plainly disowned any such Power, as we are speaking of, in themselves, and recognized it to be in the Church. And in the Church it is, always was, and will be, notwithstanding the Exercise of it may be *directed* and *regulated*, and sometimes, perhaps, *obstructed*, by the Laws and Constitutions of the State. It is no more than reasonable, that the State should have the Direction of the actual Exercise of this Authority, as to the Time, Manner, and some other outward Circumstances of it, that itself may not receive Hurt, and Damage, or be undermined and subverted by the undue Use and Application of it, a Case which otherwise might be expected sometimes, and has been

C

known

known, to happen. And so long as the Exercise of the Church's Power is thus limited, apparently with no other View than to make it comport with the Convenience and Welfare of the State, the Church, as it may lawfully, so it will prudently acquiesce in such Limitations. But, in case the State were to go about to forbid the Church all Exercise of its Power, to restrain all assembling of its Clergy, and not let them attempt any Constitutions, how necessary soever, with an avow'd or an apparent and unquestionable Design to subvert Religion and the Church, and there is manifest Danger of their being, by these means, subverted, let this Gentleman be assured, that, in such a Case, the Church will consider itself as in a state of Persecution, and not be frighted, I hope, at the Thunder of a *Premunire*, but behave as the Primitive Church did under its Heathen Persecutors, that is, exert all the Power committed to it by *Jesus Christ*, in making such Provisions as shall be found necessary for their Support and Preservation, without Leave from, and even in Opposition, if that be needful, to the Civil Powers, and to all the Powers of this present World. And tho' such Decisions would not have the force of Law, they would be Rules for the Consciences of the Faithful, who would be bound to shew them a proper Obedience and Regard.

But the grand Point (says he) which yet sticks, and, which, without your Assistance, I shall never get over, is, how came the Civil Magistrate by this Authority in the Church of Christ? Who gave him this Power to decree Rites in Christian Worship, [and to make Articles of Faith which Christ never made?] I hope I have given him some Assistance towards getting over this Difficulty, as to Rites and Ceremonies in divine Worship, [but Articles of Faith I have nothing to do with.] For having shew'd that the Civil Magistrate

trate has no such Power at all, I humbly apprehend, the Gentleman need not give himself any Trouble about the Question, how he came by it.

Before I dismiss the Argument, I can't help asking, what occasion had he to bring the Lawfulness of the Reformation into this Debate, and to put *that*, as he has done, wholly and entirely upon the issue of it, roundly pronouncing, that if the Church of *England*, and the Church of *Rome* before *her*, had really the Power and Authority we contend for, we are all wrong, *the Reformation was a rebellion against Superiors, a Disobedience to the Authority vested in the Church, and ought, as such, to be renounced by returning to the Church of Rome.* It was great Rashness (too great in Conscience) if indeed it was not Treachery and playing Booty, to set the Protestant Cause on such a sandy Foundation, and to represent it as entirely depending upon the Strength and Success of his Argument. I would not suggest an injurious Suspicion against, perhaps, an honest Gentleman, and, for what I know, a good Protestant: Yet I can't help saying this way of arguing has to me a very odd Appearance, an ill aspect upon the Protestant Religion, and may prove of dangerous Consequence. To be plain, I don't like it; and the less, for some significant Hints, Phrases, and Expressions, which meet us in the Course of it, such as *the Reformation, as we are wont to call it* [as if what we are wont to call it, it really was not] and the *Parliamentary Church of England*, which is well known to be the stale topic of Reproach, with our *Romish* Adversaries, and their Emissaries among us, against our Church, when they first accost our People in order to seduce them from it. That the Protestant Reader may not be prejudiced against the Church of *England*, by *their* and *his* calling it a *Parliamentary Church*, it may be proper to observe, that the Power

of Kings and States in matters Ecclesiastical has been and is claimed and exercised over other Churches, both Popish and Protestant, as well as ours. The Power of the Kings of *France* in Ecclesiastical Affairs every body knows to be very great: That of the Kings of *Spain* (formerly) within the Kingdom of *Sicily* much greater, so great, as to be in reality, a spiritual Monarchy, well nigh, if not quite, exclusive of the Papal. The *Venetian* Republic carries its Power in Spirituals very high: Our own *Saxon* and *Danish* Kings did the same, the Ecclesiastics, all the while, without hesitation or dispute, submitting to it: And down from the *Norman* Revolution to King *Hen. VIII.* the Kings of *England* did all along exercise, upon occasion, much the same Power in the external regimen of the Church, as belonging to them of common Right, which that Prince afterwards assumed in a more formal Manner, and if he accepted or extorted from a Popish Clergy the Title of *Head of the Church*,* they were used to be called, without scruple, *Patrons, Defenders, Tutors* and *Governors* thereof. This, I hope, may suffice to stop the Mouths of the Papists. But Princes and States also professing the Protestant Religion have never scrupled to lay the Churches in their respective Dominions under such Limitations, as seemed to them proper, and have exercised a real Jurisdiction over them. The Kings of *Sweden*, *States of Holland*, and the Civil power at *Geneva*, all do it, which I should marvel, if our Author was ignorant of. But, of all things, I marvel, that while he was making this push at the Church of *England*, he did not reflect how much he laid himself open. For if ever there was, upon the Face of the Earth, a Church that could be properly called *Parliamentary*, it was the *Presbyterial*, in the time of the Grand

*See Sir *Roger Twissden's* Histor. Vindication of the Church of *England* in the Point of Schism.

Rebellion,

Rebellion. For that was a *meer Creature of the Parliament* (and a rebellious one too) and *entirely depend-
ed* (in his Phrase) *upon the Acts and Authority there-
of for its very Essence and Frame.* As to the Inde-
pendant or Congregational Churches of those times,
they, I think, were *the Creatures* of a thing which
could not be called a Parliament; and, if one were
disposed to indulge a petulant Humour, might be
dignified with a Title which would not sound quite
so well as *Parliamentary*. And what, I pray, are
the dissenting Churches of every Denomination, at
this Day, (but in his Sense) *Parliamentary*. For do
they not *depend entirely upon an Act of Parliament,*
the Act, as we are wont to call it, of Toleration?
Are not the Qualifications of their Ministers (particu-
larly that they shall not deny in their Preaching or
Writing the Doctrine of the blessed Trinity, which
our Author would do well to remark) *and their Pow-
er to officiate limited and prescribed by Authority of
Parliament, and this Authority which first made can
alone alter, and now make them, can abolish or add to
the Articles they subscribe, according to its pleasure,
even tho' the whole Body of Dissenting Ministers ever
so much dislike, and protest earnestly against it.*— If
this be a proper Character and Description of a *Par-
liamentary Church*, and suits the Churches of Dis-
senters, who can deny but they also are *Parliamen-
tary*? And as much as this Gentleman affects to des-
pise our *Parliamentary Church*, for being such, I
dare say, no body doubts, but he, and his Friends
would gladly have a Church just as *Parliamentary*
as ours, *limited by Authority of King and Parliament*
in the same manner, provided it were *Established,*
Supported, and *Protected* in the same manner too, if
they knew but how to obtain it.

At last, to shew that neither Bishops and Clergy,
nor yet King and Parliament have any right to the
Obedience

Obedience of Christians in things of a religious Nature, we are told—that Christianity commands us to call no Man Father or Master upon Earth—to acknowledge no Authority or Jurisdiction of any, in Matters of Religion, but to remember that one, one only is our Master and Lawgiver, even Christ, and all Christians stand upon an equal Foot, having no Dominion over one another—that he only has Authority to fix the Terms of Communion for his Followers, which no man upon Earth shall presume to alter, or new make, and a great deal more to the like purpose; and, at last, a great Prélate, who, at present, (he says) adorns one of the highest Stations of our Church, is proposed to be heard, as Judge betwixt us. Heard betwixt whom? betwixt him and me? Why, I never yet intermeddled in those Points, nor will I now, but leave him to the Gentleman who debated them with his Lordship, many Years ago. But how comes it about that he should propose that one, altho' a great, Prélate, or any other, to be Judge betwixt us, when he will not allow the Church itself to be so, and says, that Christ is our sole Judge, as well as Lawgiver and Sovereign in religious Matters? I plainly perceive, that, as much as some Folks are for supporting the rights of private Judgment, in contempt of all just and proper Authority, they are content, and think it reasonable too, that private Judgment should submit to Authority improperly so called, the mere Authority of some great Name, when they are pretty sure it will determine on their side. If I was disposed to acquiesce, with Regard to these Points, in the Judgment of any, besides my own, I should think, I confess, that great Prélate too much a Party in the Cause, to be Judge, nor will he, I know, blame me, for declining his Judgment, since he not only asserts every ones Right to make enquiries into religious Truths, and to judge for himself; but also is pleased to allow

low * that the want of Learning is no Disqualification, but rather an excellent Qualification for it.

Upon the Determination of the foregoing Question concerning the Power of the Church to decree Rites and Ceremonies, *the Letter Writer* seems to think, the Issue and Determination of another, concerning the *Schism* that is betwixt us, whether the Guilt of it lie upon *them* or upon *us*, will depend. If it has a Power to decree Rites and Ceremonies, then, indeed, he allows, they ought to practise and conform to them, and the Guilt of the Schism will lie upon *them*, for refusing to do it. But if it has no such Power, then, he tells us, it will lie upon the *Church* for ordaining them, and the Dissenters are justified in not complying, or rather, are bound not to comply with them. Well, be it so for the present and let the Reader judge, even from the Issue of this Debate, where the Schism lies. Not that I yield the Point that, supposing the Church has not a Power to decree Rites, and yet *shall* decree *some*, that it would therefore be right in the People, one and all, for that Reason, to desert it. I have said *one and all* because, if it would be right for *any one*, it would be, right for *all* to do so. Suppose some one of our Dissenting Churches, or, if you please, all of them, or, put the Case that the Church of *Scotland*, by an Act of the general Assembly, should ordain, that a decent *Bason* should be provided, with clean *Water*, and placed nigh the *Pulpit*, that so the *Minister*, taking the *Child* in his *Arms*, may conveniently pour or sprinkle *Water* upon its *Face*, in the name of the *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*. Here is a Rite or (more properly speaking) several Rites ordained, *Which Jesus Christ in his Wisdom did not think proper*, and which the Church (by the supposition) had no Authority to ordain, and one of them, at least, as exceptionble

* *Ans.* to Represent; p. 99.

exceptionable, as any excepted against in our Church. for, in my opinion, the sprinkling in Baptism may be as plausibly opposed, as the crossing after Baptism can be. What this Gentleman will say or think of such an Appointment I know not. 'Tis likely he will say, and so he must, if he would talk consistently, this is *Lording it over God's Heritage, and usurping Christ's Throne, setting themselves up for Rulers and Lawmakers in his Kingdom, and claiming Homage from his Subjects*, unless the kindness he has for these Churches should a little soften him. But will any sober and judicious Dissenter say, that, in such Case, it would become the Duty of all the Dissenters here in *England*, or of all the Presbyterians in the Church of *Scotland*, to separate themselves from *those*, and to form themselves into *other* Churches, where no such Rites should be decreed, or admitted? If he would not, (and I don't believe he would) does not he plainly perceive his Partiality, when he holds it right for all the People of this Land to forsake the Church of *England* for two or three Rites, tho' it had not (we'll suppose) sufficient Authority to ordain them? The Church (we'll say) is highly blameable for requiring them; but from hence it will not presently follow, that they may not be lawfully complied with, and submitted to, by the People. For some sorts of Things there are, which for very valuable Ends, and weighty Considerations, such as the Peace, Quiet, and Unity of the Church confessedly are, they *innocently may*, and *should* submit to, even supposing their Pastors and Governors were not quite innocent in requiring them.

After all this, the intelligent Reader will, I hope, apprehend that the charge of Schism is not quite so easily retorted upon our Church, as he imagined it to be, only by shewing, that it has not Power to decree

decree any Rites at all, had he been able to shew *that*.—But indeed I wonder he should give himself any Trouble about retorting the Charge of it, if it be really so harmless a thing as he seems to think it. He calls it (plainly with a Sneer) *the heinous Sin of Schism*; what I had said upon it he also calls (contemptuously) *Grave Lectures*, and professes to treat them as *Solemn Cant, and Ecclesiastical Scarecrows*. If he was fully persuaded in his Mind, and really thought he had proved, that it lay upon *us*, no doubt but he would readily have joined with me in exaggerating the Guilt of it, and not have resented, as he does, my describing it in *such terrifying and black Colours*. But in making so light of it, he plainly discovers a little Consciousness, that, with all his pains, he has not been able to remove it from his own Door.

It seems to be now growing mighty modish with their People to laugh at all Notions of Church Communion, and to make nothing of the most unnecessary Separations. But from the Beginning it was not so. *St. Paul* has some *grave Lectures* upon the Subject: *Ignatius, Irenæus, Cyprian*, and many more of the primitive Fathers, and Martyrs of the Church, *canted* also mightily upon it. And, to come nearer our own times, and to those whose Authority, 'tis like, will have more Weight, so did the old *Puritans*, the falsely pretended Forefathers of our Dissenters; and, indeed, no body did it more, if so much as they. And those who, afterwards, were formed and regular Dissenters, if one may call them so, were much freer of their Censures and Condemnations of all unnecessary Separations, than the Modern are seen to be. Those Gentlemen seem to me to have been more thoroughly possessed with the Notion that our Terms of Lay-Communion were really sinful, and, consequently, that their Separation was

D

necessary

necessary, and without blame, and so were more open and sincere in declaring their Sentiments against such Separations as were really unnecessary and causeless. But now, that the Terms of Lay-Communion are better understood than formerly, and few or none amongst the learned or intelligent Dissenters do really hold them to be sinful, they are driven to say (for what else can they say?) in excuse for their Separation, but that Separation is nothing, a Matter which nobody need give himself any Concern about, that all Churches and Communions, where true Doctrine is delivered, are indifferent, and that Schism is no other than a Nick-name which every Party casts upon all that are not of their Society. These Notions, indeed, are for *our* People; but when they are dealing with their *own*, either to prevent or cure any Separation of their *own* Flocks, they may be observed to fly as high in their Principles and Notions of these Matters, and to be as orthodox, as one could wish. 'Tis true, indeed, the old Ecclesiastical Term *Schism* they are commonly found to be shy of using, as becomes those to be who are professed Contemners of all Ecclesiastical Antiquity, and perhaps also, as it might bring to remembrance, and too strongly impress upon their Minds, the Guilt of that Schism from the Established Church, which they are, one and all, involved in. But, they are never sparing in talking to them of the *heinousness of religious Contentions, spiritual Fairs, Factions and Parties, Divisions, Rents, Ruptures, and Breaches*, which are all one with Schism, in Sense and Meaning. Now and then it happens, that some part of a Congregation have, for their greater Conveniency, or for better Edification, or some other Cause, no matter what, thought fit to erect a new Meeting-house, and to make provision for a Minister to officiate therein, in the near Neighbourhood of one

to which they before resorted. When this has been doing, what Endeavours have not been used to hinder it! What Outcries of Faction and Contention have been raised against those who promoted it! The Reader, I hope, will pardon me, if I tell him a homely Story, but pertinent enough to our present Purpose. On such an Occasion, a plain Countryman, a zealous Adherent to the former House, once said to me---*That the setting up of this new House, to blow up the old, was as wicked a thing as the Gunpowder-Treason.* Whereupon I ask'd him, *Why it should not be thought as wicked a thing to set up the first House to blow up the Parish Church there, as to set up the Second to blow up the First.* With this Question my honest Friend was a little hobbled; which I don't wonder at; for I fancy his Betters would have been so too. They have much the same Sentiments with this plain Rustick, tho', 'tis like, they would express them after a different Manner. They see plainly enough, the evil of setting up Church against Church, and Altar against Altar, when the Unity, Peace, and Interests of *their own Churches* only are concerned. But setting up Churches against the Church of *England*, why must *that* (a thing far more unwarrantable) be made nothing of? A Secession from one Church of Dissenters to another is no criminal Schism, because the Church, seceded from is itself in a Schism. But being made from a sound Part of the Catholic Church, in Unity with the rest, it is plainly such, and I'll venture to say once again, without fear of Drollery upon my *Grave Lectures*, puts a Man into an evil State.

The Gentleman adds, *You see likewise how extremely unapt, and quite wide of the Point are the two Instances you bring, to illustrate our Case, viz. of a Wife separating from the Bed and Board of her Husband— or of two or three Counties disliking a Monar-*

Monarchical Government, and throwing off their Allegiance to the King. But he greatly mistakes me here; for I did not produce those Parallels to illustrate their Case, meaning by that, to shew they were really in a Schism, by casting off the Authority which the Church of *England* has over them, but only to shew, that their Separation from it could not be properly called, as they are wont to call it, a *peaceable* one. For as the Wife's Separation from her Husband, after the Manner described, and the withdrawing of two or three of the Counties from under the Government of the King, and casting off their Allegiance to him, could not be truly called *peaceable*, tho', in the former Case, all proper Decencies were preserved, and, in the latter, it was their Desire to do all without Disorder and Tumult, and with Professions of great Honour for the Person of his Majesty, and of mighty good Will to the rest of their Fellow Subjects, who continued firm in their Allegiance, so (said I) their Separation from the Church can't be called *peaceable*, whatever Professions they make of Charity towards Churchmen, and how well soever they carry it towards them in common Life. This is the only Case I meant to illustrate by those parallel Instances; but if I had really meant by those Instances, to illustrate the Nature and Sinfulness of Schism, I can't yet perceive the Unaptness of them, especially of the latter, even for that Purpose. To shew the Unaptness of it, he asks this Question, *Have we ever sworn Allegiance to it! [to the Church] or do we owe it any Homage, as the Counties have sworn, and do owe to the King?* To pass by the Discovery, that the Oath of Allegiance is used to be taken by the Counties, as if it was taken by all in a body, at the same time, or, however, at one time or other, by every Inhabitant thereof; Does he imagine that none owe Allegiance but those that have sworn it? Whoever

is born within the Dominions of the King owes him a *natural Allegiance*; and a Foreigner residing here, owes him some, tho' neither the one nor the other ever swore to bear him Allegiance, nor engaged himself to do it by any personal and voluntary Act. In like manner, all *Christians* living within the Pale of the Church of *England*, which is co-extended with the Kingdom, may truly be said to owe it, if not Allegiance (which the Gentleman has artfully thrown in, because he knows that is always reserved for the King) yet due Obedience and Submission, and are, *de jure*, whether they will be, or not, *de facto*, true Members and Subjects of it. The Bishops and Priests of this Church are their Shepherds, and Dissenters, even dissenting Ministers, as well as others, are their Sheep. And tho' they have leaped the Fold and gone astray, they are still *theirs*, and do not (I hope) become the Property of every one who can pick them up, and lead them away to some other Fold. The much celebrated Mr. *Hales* has a Definition of Schism, which this Gentleman, if he had known or thought of it, would, doubtless, have tried to avail himself of. I tell him of it, to let him see I am not for smothering any thing that has the least Appearance against me. He defines it, *an unnecessary Separation from that Part of the visible Church, of which we once were Members*. If by being Members of that Part of the Church be meant, their living, for any time, in actual Communion with it, the Definition is wrong, and the Insinuation it contains absolutely false. For from thence would follow this most ridiculous Absurdity, that tho' the first Separatists were, indeed, Schismatics, all who come after them, and tread in the same Steps, to the End of the World, would be good Catholick *Christians*: And tho' our present Methodists, (for Instance) who have divided themselves, needlessly,

from

from the Church of *England*, are in a Schism, those who were born since their Separation, and shall be educated in their way, and never actually communicate with the Church, will not be in it. But if having been Members of that Part of the Church, means only, belonging properly to it, and being under some Obligation to live in Communion with it, it will not help him, because, in this Sense, he, and every Dissenter, is really a Member of the Church of *England*, and, therefore, according to that Definition, schismatically divided from it. And this, by the way, will shew, there is no such Absurdity as he fancies (p. 23.) in the Church of *England*'s excommunicating, or otherwise extending its Authority over Dissenters. *The Church of Christ* (says he) never excommunicates nor pretends to exercise its Discipline upon any but its own Members*. For what have I to do (the Apostle says) to judge them that are without? But the Church of *England* extends its Ecclesiastical Authority over those who never belonged to it, and by a very extraordinary Act of Power excommunicates such as never were of its Communion, that is, it casts such from, who never were in, it. In common Life, (he proceeds) such a thing would be reckoned marvellous indeed. Should I solemnly threaten, yea actually proceed, to cast a Person out of my House who never was in it, I should work as great a Miracle as ever was wrought in the Church of *Rome*.—Whatever may be thought of the *Wir* and *Flumour* of this Passage, sure I am the Divinity of it is not good. The Words of *St. Paul* are no way pertinent to the present Case: For by those who are without, he does not mean *Christians*, subject to other Jurisdictions, and not to his (unless you can suppose there were *Christians* at *Corinth* whom an Apostle had nothing to do with) but those who are without the Church,

no

no Christians at all, but mere infidels and Unconverted, as the Opposition between *them*, and him, who, in the former Verse, is said to be called a *Brutler*, manifestly shews. Nor is he more happy in his Reasoning, than in his Application of holy Scripture. For how, I pray, is it more ridiculous, in our Church, to excommunicate, and cast out of it such Persons as do properly belong to it, and are *de jure* Members of it, tho' they will not, for the present, come to it, than it would be in the Government to pass a Sentence of Outlawry against any Person who has already fled out of the Kingdom, and is settled elsewhere, with no more visible or probable Intent to return to it, than this Gentleman, the Letter-writer, shews at present, to return into the Bosom of the Church.

The next Point that *shall* come before us (for I can't say it comes in order, it being a little too much the manner of this Gentleman loosely to scatter, and strew up and down, what he would say upon most Subjects) is *that* of sitting or kneeling, at the Lord's Supper. And here, to do him right, he speaks more like an Answerer, and comes nearer up to the Case in Hand, than he does any where besides. He tells me, that my Account of them, that they impose sitting, and that this is their *regular* and *universal* Practice, is *absolutely without Truth*, and quite *contrary to Fact*, and expects that an *ingenuous Blush* should cover my Face for giving so false an Account of them. Could he have charged me with any Act of notorious Insincerity, with asserting what I *know* to be *contrary to Fact*; for example, had I assured the Reader, that *Christ* and his Apostles † *without all peradventure*, sat around the Table, when every body knows, who knows any thing at all, that they used the recumbent Posture, which is no

more Sitting than it is Kneeling, had I been guilty (I say) of any unfair and disingenuous Dealing of this kind, he might justly have called for a *Blush*, and I should certainly have answered to his Call. But, he might, and should have remembered, that, in consideration of their being so *various*, as well as so *secret* in all their Ways, * I had bespoke (as I thought I had some Right to do) their *Forgiveness*, or a *more gentle Correction*, if I should happen to mistake any of them. I don't put him in mind of this, or claim the Benefit of it, because I think myself here under any great difficulty. For I am in some Hopes, he will be found, in the main, to have miscorrected me, and that he himself stands in need of a *gentle Correction*, for his own Representation of their Principle and Practice, touching this Matter. What he says upon it, is, partly, what he *knows*, partly, what he has been, by others, *well informed of*, and partly also, what he *believes* himself. What he says of his own Knowledge is only this, that *in the Church to which he belongs, there is a Person, who for many Years has constantly received kneeling, without the least Offence to the Congregation, or any Expostulation from the Minister on that Account.* This he knows to be true; so I shall say no more about it. But, as to his Information, that *in some of their Churches, there are some who receive standing, some kneeling*, I may be allowed, I hope, to sift and examine it a little.—What meaneth then, I ask this *Informant*, by *some* of their Churches which have admitted kneeling, and what by *some* in those Churches who receive kneeling? In artless and simple Language, by *some of their Churches* would be meant, if not quite half, yet such a competent Number, as bear some kind of Proportion with the rest; and *some who receive kneeling*, when put in opposition, as it is here,

* Letter II. p. 5.

to *some who receive sitting*, would be understood in the same Manner. But if three or four only of their Churches, and only three or four Communicants, who receive kneeling in those Churches, or any such Number, be all that are meant by *some*, tho', perhaps, he might speak, literally, Truth, yet 'tis evident, he spake as deceitfully, as I should be thought to do, if, giving some Account of the Dissenting Churches here in *England*, I should say, *some of them have a Bell to call the People together to divine Worship, and some have not*, because I know one which has, and have been informed there is, somewhere, one or two more which have the same. Which soever Sense was meant, I am still ready to believe, that, in this latter Sense, the Words come nearer to the Truth, or rather that they are true, in that Sense only. If there were any considerable Number who received kneeling, I hardly think it could have been altogether a secret to Conformists; and not have come out, till this Gentleman had been pleased to reveal it. For I don't believe there is one of us in a thousand that know any more of its ever being received so, in their Churches, than I myself did, when I called *sitting* their *unvaried* and *universal* Practice. Had he been speaking of the Practice of our Church, I don't suppose he would have thought he had any Reason to make the least Difficulty of calling kneeling our *unvaried* and *universal* Practice. Yet as he tells me, there is, in the Congregation to which he belongs, one who always receives kneeling, so I can tell *him*, there is one, in my Church, to whom, by Reason of some Inability she is under of putting herself into a kneeling Posture, I give it standing, without the least Fear of being censured for it, by my Superiors, or others. And, without all Question, there are, in other Places, those who receive standing, upon the same Account.

E

However;

However, I hope, there is not more Untruth, or greater Impropriety, in my calling sitting their *universal Practice*, than there is in his saying (where he is speaking of the Converts lately gained to Popery) † that *they are gathered all from our Church; whereas, from among the Dissenters, you hardly ever hear of one gained.*

What he believes, is, that there is not among their Ministry one in five Hundred, who would refuse to give the Sacrament either standing or kneeling to any one who thought either of these the fittest Posture of receiving. That is, two or three perhaps, in all England. What all the rest would do, as to giving it standing, I will not say: But, as to those who would be free to give it kneeling, I doubt he is mistaken, and that greatly too, in his Computation. I do not doubt (and did expressly say it, *Letter II. p. 65.*) but there are some few in a freer and juster way of thinking concerning this Matter, and who would not scruple to give the Sacrament kneeling to one who should earnestly desire it; but am not yet satisfied, that the Bulk and Generality of them, and much less, All in a manner, would do so. I have been informed of a Gentleman in Communion with their Churches once saying, that with great Satisfaction he had heard his own Minister declare, he would not scruple to give it kneeling to such as should desire to receive it so. But this being heard with some degree of Surprise, as well as Satisfaction, it plainly shews, not only, that, in the Church he belonged to, none had desired or been used to receive it so, but also, that such a way of thinking as he found in that Minister was not every where to be met with.

That we may see their Liberty, as to this Matter, he refers us to Mr. Baxter's reformed Liturgy, as he calls it, where it is expressly said, *And let none of the*

People be forced to Sit, Stand, or Kneel, in the Act of receiving, whose Judgment is against it. But why did he not rather send us to the *Directory*, which, I suppose, he will not deny to be much more their Rule, than that Liturgy? No, no, *That*, he knew from me, tho' doubtless, he knew it otherwise too, confines them to Sitting. He might have sent us as properly to that Liturgy to shew us their Liberty touching the reading of the three Creeds, the *Athanasian* as well as the other; for all three are there allowed to be sometimes read in the public Worship of the Lord's Day. Nay, he might as well have referr'd us to it, to let us see what is their Liberty, or rather, what are their Principles, with respect to Forms of Prayer, *viz.* that they prefer them to extemporary or free Prayer; for here we have a Form, which extemporary Prayer was to give way to, and make room for. Does not he know, *that* Liturgy was composed, not for the use of Dissenters, apart by themselves, but with a view to a Coalition between the Church and Dissenters, and that, therefore, a Liberty of Practice, in regard to some Points which had before divided them, was found necessary to be allowed, that so, some Content might be given to each Party. But the Design miscarrying, they, one and all, dropp'd the Liturgy they had framed, and *would have had imposed*, and took as kindly as ever to free Prayer, and in other things, instead of advancing towards the Church, went off, and, to this day, keep off from it, in almost every respect as far as they can well contrive to do. And if this Humour continues, it will, in all likelihood, for ever prevent that Union which is so desirable. Whereas, if they would join with us in Communion as far only as they can, or, if, continuing separate and divided from us, they would so frame the Worship, and settle the Order of their Churches, as to bring

them to some tolerable Nearness to our Church, complying in such things as they never once pretended to have any Scruples about, and which their Consciences would suffer them, without the least fear of Sin, to comply with, I am well satisfied, such Relaxations and Abatements, for the rest would soon be made them, on the Part of the Church, as would give them entire Satisfaction. And who can deny but it is their Duty to go thus far? For if it would have been their Duty (which, I guess, most of them will acknowledge) to conform themselves *entirely* to the Church, in Case they had *no* Exceptions to *any thing* in it, surely it must be their Duty not to refuse Conformity to any thing, but what they esteem to be really exceptionable.

After this short Digression, I return to the Subject I was upon, to wit, the Principles and Dispositions of their Ministers, and the Practice of some of their Churches, in regard to Kneeling at the Sacrament, which, however, I have now nothing more to say upon, than this, that, if they are really such as my Answerer seems desirous they should be thought to be, I am heartily glad of it. It will be to me, I do assure him, a most sincere Pleasure to find I am mistaken in these Matters, and that the pitiful Superstition of their Forefathers, which made them dread to approach, by reason of Kneeling, our Altars, is now wearing off both among Ministers and People. In due time, I hope, we shall see a softening in some other things. However I entreat him, for our greater Satisfaction, if he shall take in hand to write again, to make in the mean while, among *the many Ministers and Churches he is acquainted with*, some more particular Enquiries whether these things really are so, and to tell us plainly, whether we may be allowed to publish them, upon his Authority, among their own People, and may ground upon them

them in our future Controversies, if indeed, after such a Concession, there can be any Controversy at all upon this Point. For if their Ministers are so universally free to give, and so many of their Communicants do already receive it Kneeling, in their own Churches, it may be reasonably hoped, we shall hear no more of that Posture, as a bar to Communion with our Church.

Thus much for the Point of Kneeling or Sitting at the Lord's Supper, and I now go on to another. I happened to say in my *First Letter* p. 73. that the Catholic Church is a *Society divinely instituted*; and this he is pleased to call an *excellent Definition* of it. I am not of his Opinion; for as it was not meant for a Definition, so it will make but a lame and imperfect one. But I plainly perceive the Excellency of it lies only in this, that it furnish'd him with a handle, such an one as it is, for heaping together abundance of Misrepresentation, to say no worse, of the Constitution of the Church of *England*. But as these Misrepresentations are so palpable that every judicious Reader will presently perceive them to be such, and as he has only laid hold of those few Words of mine, to serve him (as I said) for a handle to introduce them, and I don't observe any one thing in the whole fifteen Pages which they take up (almost half his Pamphlet) wherein he pretends to refute or contradict any Position advanced in my *Letters*, I think I may fairly be excused from taking any Notice at all of them. Yet I can't help pointing out to the Reader one or two of these. One is, his Misrepresentation of our Constitution, in regard to the Regal Supremacy. The Constitution he has given us is much the same with that given us by the Author of the *Rights*, &c. among the Freethinkers, and that by *Obadiab Walker* among the Papists, in his *Relation of the English Reformation*. And the Answers to them will

will be, I think, more than sufficient to serve him. The other is of the Proceedings of the Convocation against Mr. *Whiston*, which whoever compares with real Facts, will have a fair Specimen of our Author's Talent at representing, and be thoroughly convinced, *that* is a business which he is, by no means, to be trusted in.—As to the Contrast, so pompously displayed in his Title Page, which he has been pleased to set the Church of *England* and the Church of *Jesus Christ* in, let him know, that, if I was minded, I could draw another between the Church of *Christ* and the Churches of Dissenters, and that too, without taking such Liberties of placing Things in unfair and wrong Lights as he has been pleased to allow himself in.

I am now come towards the Conclusion of his Pamphlet, and have but one thing before me, which I esteem my self any way concerned in. When he began to write, he had resolved, it seems, as he tells us, p. 2. *not to enter upon the Enquiry, among which, Churchmen or Dissenters, the best Means for holy living are found.* But such was his Zeal for *Arianism*, that it would not let him keep to that Resolution, so he singles out one of the Means and Advantages towards holy Living, which I had observed to be peculiar, in a manner, to our Church, viz. *the use of the three Creeds in the publick Worship, as one of the most effectual and powerful Means both for teaching and preserving the Christian Faith entire and uncorrupt,* which they have not in their Churches. But what End does he do it for? Not to shew, that the reading of them is of no use to any such Purposes, to teach and secure the Faith set forth in them, or that, if it be, they read them in their publick Worship as well as we, one of which, surely, should have been, if it could have been, done by an Answerer. He does indeed say, *the Creed called the Apostles we have in constant use among us;* which I take

I take to be another of his dressed-up Expressions. He does not, because, I suppose, he could not, say, that they constantly use or rehearse it in their ordinary Worship, which was the Use of it I spake of, (tho' any Reader, who did not know whether they do use it there or not, would take him to mean so) but only that *it is in constant Use amongst them*; but in what Manner, and upon what Occasions, it is used amongst them, he thinks it proper to be silent. But as to the other two, not only the *Athanasian*, which has the damnatory Sentences that so offend him, but the *Nicene* also, which has none of those Sentences, but is only more explicite than the Apostles Creed, in the Points of the true Divinity of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; as to both these *he is content* (he says) *we should have the Honour of their being peculiar to ourselves*. But how are they, pray, peculiar to us? They are so, I confess, in the Use, but not in the Approbation of them, the Dissenting Ministers solemnly approving and subscribing them, as well as we. And what must we think of such as do thus solemnly subscribe them, while they hold them to be erroneous, and scruple not to tell us, *they are content we should have the Honour of their being peculiar to ourselves*.

A Man of a plain and simple Understanding would certainly have thought, that, in this, I had them fast; but see what Ingenuity will do!

Homini homo quid praeſtat, ſtulto intelligens?

He has an easy way to bring them out of this Entanglement. For, first he tells us from Dr. Calamy, that the Dissenting Ministers about the City, in a Body, gave in their Sense of the Articles, when they subscribed them, and among the rest, of this 8th Article, in the Gloss upon which, the damnatory Clauses of this Creed are expressly excluded the Subscription. This is the Fact, and then you have the Use and Application

tion of it. Now, (says he) the Fathers and Predecessors of the present Dissenting Ministers having made this public Protest and Declaration, at their Subscription, and the Legislature having accepted, or, at least, not rejected it, under the favour of this Protest, their Successors may be supposed now to subscribe with the same Disapprobation of the damnable Clauses. As to their Fathers and Predecessors, they, I should have thought, might have subscribed these Clauses, without any explanatory Declaration, as safely, as they could have subscribed (which the greatest Opposers of all Subscription profess they are ready to do) the holy Scriptures, or, at least, a thousand Passages therein, and particularly this,—*¶ He that believeth not shall be damned*; or this—*† He that believeth not the Son, shall not see Life, but the Wrath of God abideth on him*; or this again—** The Works of the Flesh are manifest, which are (among others) these—Seditions, Heresies—of which I tell you—that they which do such Things shall not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven*. These Sentences of Scripture are to be reasonably and modestly expounded, and plainly require the same kind of softening and qualifying Construction which those Sentences in the Creed do; and as they would not have scrupled, I suppose, to have subscribed these, without any Protest or Declaration, or any *Human Explanation* of them, so, in my Opinion, they need not have scrupled to have subscribed the other, after the same Manner, the Nature of all such Propositions necessarily requiring such Construction, and the Governors of the Church, who exact these Subscriptions, having, all along, and upon all Occasions, openly declared, not only that they *admit*, but that they also *expect* it, and, indeed, that they *expect no other*. Neither, can I perceive how their subscribing after this Manner clears up

*§ Mark xvi. 16. † John iii. 36. * Gal. v. 19, 20, 21.*

their

their Sincerity to the World. For where is the Sincerity of a *Protestatio contra factum*? of subscribing Assent to the Truth of certain Propositions, with a view to satisfy the Law, and to qualify themselves for some Employment, or other Benefit they are seeking to obtain, and, at the same time declaring they do not, in their Judgments, assent to it? For, put the Subscription and Protestation together, and they will be found to amount to this, "I firmly believe this Creed, and every Part thereof, to be true, and take Notice, all you that are present, that I here subscribe it, as such: But you may, if you please, take Notice too, that I believe some Parts of it to be false, and would not be understood to include the whole in this my Subscription." I don't deny, but this way of subscribing against ones Judgment is rather more honest and sincere than subscribing against it, without giving any Notice thereof; but I think nevertheless, * with Mr. *Whiston*, that it can't be done with perfect Sincerity and Truth. And if the protesting for themselves did not make their Subscriptions justifiable, how much less justifiable are the Subscriptions of the present Ministers, upon the Protestations of their Predecessors, made perhaps many Years before they were born? What such Connexion can there possibly be between their *Predecessors* and *them*, that the Acts of the former shall be imputable to the latter? What greater Connexion between the Forefathers and their Successors

* Mr. *Whiston* tells us he did what he could to dissuade the late Dr. *Clark* from taking his Doctor's Degree, because he knew he could not, with perfect Truth and Sincerity, subscribe the *Athanasian* Parts of the XXXIX Articles; and when he could not prevail on that Head, he pers'd him, at least, to declare openly, and, if it might be, in Writing also, in *what Sense* he subscribed the suspected Articles, that so he might preserve at least some degree of Sincerity and a good Conscience. *Memoirs of the Life of Dr. Samuel Clark*, p. 12.

in the Ministry, than there is between the Forefathers according to the Flesh, and their Posterity and Descendants? And why must the present Set of Ministers be supposed to subscribe with a Disapprobation of the damnatory Clauses, under the favour of the Protest of those who ministred before them in their several Churches, than they can be supposed to do it, under the Favour of the Protests of their Grand-Fathers or Great-Grand-Fathers? Or, if the Benefit of their Predecessors Protests and Declarations may be, in Reason and common Sense, communicated to such as come after them, tell me, I pray, how far and wide they are communicable? Are they communicable only to those who succeed them in the same Churches, or to those also who come after them, in other Churches? What the Dissenting Ministers about the City then did in a Body, is it to be imputed only to the Body of the present Dissenting Ministers about the City, or to the Dissenting Ministers in the Country too? Or, does it extend only to their next and immediate Successors, whether in City or Country, or to how many Successions? Or, will it descend to the End of Time, in Case the Dissention should so long continue? Or, if their Forefathers Declarations and Protests are to be taken for their Protests and Declarations, why should not too, their Forefathers Subscriptions be also taken for their Subscriptions? So that, in this way, all the Dissenting Ministers in *England* may be esteemed to have *subscribed* the Articles, to have *protested* against some of them, and *explained their Sense* of others, merely by Imputation, without having done any thing at all, in either of those kinds, in their own proper Persons. This, I think, discovers, in a ridiculous, indeed, but, nevertheless, in a true Light, the Vanity and Absurdity of this Gentleman's Notion
of

of protesting without protesting, upon which he grounds the Uprightness and Sincerity of their present Ministers Subscriptions. And if they do really subscribe, as he hopes they do, upon this Principle, I will say this for them in spite of all Men, that how hard soever they are to be satisfied in some Things, they are as easily satisfied as any Men I know, in other Things.

As I intend to preserve the Privilege I have claimed, and am undoubtedly entitled to, of answering or not, as I shall see Cause, to such Points as I have no manner of Concern in, so I shall pass by what he says of the growth of Deism, as like to be promoted [not by the *Arian* Subscription of Ministers, but, it seems] by our Forms and Doctrines concerning the Trinity, and also his Suggestion (which I forgive) of *my being amongst the weak and uncharitable Minds, who damn to the Pit of Hell all who cannot receive all the dark and mysterious Points set forth in the Athanasian Creed, and the whole Greek Church for rejecting the Article of the Filioque*, which I did not give him, in any thing I have said, the least Occasion or Handle for. Nor shall I concern myself with the *Learning and Virtue* (so much celebrated) of *those bright Ornaments of our own Church*, his *Arian* Worthies, further than to observe, that he does not think, I hope, their Subscription any Proof or Instance of their Virtue, and of the moral Integrity of their Characters, and that one of them (if Mr. *Whiston* knew him, and he pretends to have known him, better than any body else) was a much better and more serious Christian † *in the Days of St. Hermas*, (as he expresses it) the Days of his Youth and Orthodoxy, than in his latter Days, after he had fallen into the new Opinions which this Gentleman

is so fond of. And whether that Change for the worse was not owing to his insincere and fraudulent Subscriptions, and the constant use of Forms which he did not approve of, whereby his Conscience was defiled, I leave others to consider.

I have now finished my Reply to such Parts of this Letter as seemed to concern me; and indeed to something more; and, upon the whole, flatter myself, that every unprejudiced and judicious Person will be of Opinion, that I must have *another kind of Answer* before my poor *Letters* will be confuted. I think, by a just and fair Calculation, he has not, in this Performance, pretended to answer so much as a twentieth Part of those Letters; and has, therefore, so much Work yet before him, as will leave him no room, I should think, for diverting himself with other Matters. But if, contrary to my so just and reasonable Expectation, he shall think fit, neglecting his own proper Business, to be perpetually roaming into Foreign Topicks, he shall have his Way, and roam as he pleases; but he shall roam by himself; at least, not have me for his Companion.



F I N I S.

he
nt
ch
was

of
to
y-
on
nd
ed.
in
s a
fo
no
er
on-
his
in-
nd
f;